252
262 For the less well-to-do, the cheapest meat is chicken, and this red pepper stew is called "qäy doro wät". Slaughtering, even of chicken, must be done by men. The pious pronounce the invocation, "In the name of the Father, the Son, the holy Ghost, one Divinity"(because of the Monophysite faith). Then the housewife takes over, removes the feathers in boiling water, singes the skin, inflates the outer skin by blowing into the cut skin near the throat. She then cleans the chicken and rubs it with pea flour. Inner organs and wings and legs are washed with salt and lemon juice, then lightly roasted. In another pan, minced red onion, red pepper and other spices are fired in butter, water is added and stirred, ground salt is powdered over it. Then boiled, shelled eggs are added. Now all chicken parts are boiled with this prepared mixture, in a deeper clay pot.

Whenever any of these vegetable or meat stews is boiled without red pepper, the stew is called "alecha", and, unless this dish is added to the menu for variety, it is considered a poor substitute. It is given to very young infants and to persons with intestinal ailments, and so [758] [576] constitutes a symbol for weakness. (It is a major insult to call a man "alecha", because the term also means "impotent".)

Most often alecha is boiled with chicken, "yädoro alecha". Red onion is preferred in butter, in a clay pot ("dest"). Peeled vegetables such as tomatoes (in urban areas) and water are added. The chicken, disjointed, washed and dried, is boiled in this. Powdered ginger, cloves, green pepper without seeds, sweet basil are added,

273 [272] Since fermenting mead is too specialized for the ordinary housewife and it must usually be bought, the peasant consumes his honey-drink more often as "berz", unfermented honey water, and this is what he offers an honored guest, in addition to barley beer. If the peasant consumes mead, he usually does it away from home, at the nearest big market or town where he has gone to sell his products. For two liters of mead he has to pay as much as he receives for an entire kilo of honey (ETh$1.- or US$0.40). He cannot usually afford more and leaves after one bottle.

In the fermentation of mead, "gesho" or other hops mentioned are used. Six or seven parts of water to one part of honey, plus gesho, are stirred in a huge barrel or large imported tin can. This permits the tapping of the finished product at the bottom, as a jar would not. The first, lightly fermented mead is called "bätäha". Mead fermented several months to a year, more expensive and of higher prestige is "däräq" (lit. dry), a strong intoxicant.

272 Coffee is served black, after roasting, crushing and boiling in front of an honored guest. Salt may be added, African style, but never sugar (which, however, is added to imported tea drunk in towns). Milk is never added, but sometimes butter, even spiced butter. Coffee may grow wild, or may be purchased at the market: long berry from Harar, or from Jimma.

● 576 A significant culture trait is connected with the serving of any drink. The servant who pours, or the host himself in case of an honored guest, pours a small mouthful into his own cupped hand and drinks it publicly. This

576 is called "qamash", an important etiquette. Its origin may stem from the well-known oriental pattern of protecting an important personage from being poisoned, and since the feudal lord is still imitated among the Amhara, even by peasants, the custom is still prevalent in rural areas, provincial towns, and even in Addis Ababa.

E. Utensils and Tools.

322 Whenever possible, the Amhara likes to utilize direct products of nature, such as natural shape of branches, branch forks, branches at the right angle (e.g.for adzes), gradual thickening of a branch of hardwood (e.g. for ax handles). Much time is spent in the bush looking for the right wood, for there is no carpentry on any developed level. Sawing is unknown. So is splitting of wood to prepare boards, so that laborious chopping away at a log from both sides would be necessary. Nailing and gluing is still not done in rural areas. To drill a hole in wood, the blacksmith is called and burns a hole with an iron poke. Oxhide strips are used for fastening.

412 415 Therefore there are very few wooden utensils. Spoons and forks are not used by the Amhara. During dinner, pieces of enjara are ripped from the edge, to serve as spoon and fork. Then the piece is used to fish out a morsel of meat and some of the sauce of the "wot". Iron knives are used at dinner time only at a feast of "brundo", raw beef, when a red morsel is cut off just in front of the teeth.

412 415 463 Preparations of tools and utensils fall into four categories of division of labor: (1) Work done by special-

661/644 might gain in favor and edge him out with contrived accusations.

This pattern can still be observed, from the modest court of the sub-provincial governor and local judge, to the palace courtyard of the emperor himself. It is called "dāj tenāt" (lit. waiting by the gate). The frequency of appearance, in order to remain in good graces, is usually twice a week; more often if a special favor is sought. The place is preferably within a few yards [575] of a spot where the lord (or emperor) will pass. When this takes place, the courtier bows from the hips, very low. This will usually be acknowledged with a small nod. The procedure is considered essential by the aspirant for office, and by the office-holder, for these reasons:

Positive Reasons:

Reaffirmation of continued loyalty;

To indicate readiness to receive orders, pass messages, give information;

To enable the lord to play his paternalistic role (i.e. the lord can and periodically does ask whether the courtier is happy in his job or [576] wishes a new one; ettiquette requires a response of happiness at least for six months after having received a job, even if it was a demotion or an unpleasant task).

Negative Reasons:

To counteract rumors of disloyalty spread by rivals;

867
[539] "He, before becoming old,
wants to be serious".

(This is also said of a young man who saves gifts for a bride before he has chosen a girl).

When the adolescent boys take part in the aforementioned ritual mock-battles, younger boys imitate them by staging similar hazing-battles among their age peers.

Little girls are encultured in somewhat similar fashion by peers of their own sex, but more often including some older girls who patronize the younger. Girls are not taught any social graces among commoner Amharas, so that they sit shyly and wordless when in the company of men. Any girl who shows signs of daring is mocked and hazed as "gobba" (daring, enterprising female). Generally the activities of girls are less violent,. At times when boys fight their ritual mock-battles, girls dance rounds and sing in unison.

Both boys and girls are taught to be right-handed, and a
[264
576 "lefty" is extremely rare. They are taught to eat with the right
514 hand, shake hands with the right, and use the left for wiping themselves with leaves after defecating. But the prohibition against use of the left hand on other occasions is not as severe as among Arabs.

[754] Both sexes fear the supernatural "buda" spirit, also in the shape of human sorcerer and magical hyena. Older boys claim they can distinguish the cry of a real hyena from that of a magical one, and sometimes scare younger children by imitating the howl.

867
302 Sex differentiation among children is expressed in the hair style. Boys wear a single coxcomb hairlock, girls a ring of hair around the shaven skull which sometimes may contain a center hair-

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

000 letting the audience become aware of this collusion. (footnote 93).

B. Interpersonal Etiquette and Relationships.

571 Interpersonal etiquette among the Amhara governs particularly
576 those relations that can be described as "secondary group", for relations
602 within the "primary group" are governed largely by specific kinship or religious rules of behavior.

It is a rare case - and considered very sad - if a person has no kin, and must base most of his human relations on secondary- group affiliations. The latter relationship includes most prominently the "agär" (lit. country, i.e. home district). Sometimes this refers only to the immediate parish, sometimes to the "meketl worada" sub-district; but if a person finds himself in another province he may include the entire district, "worada"; though the concept of "agär" does not usually extend beyond this territory in any real meaning of secondary group. If a person has no kin to turn to for aid in legal trouble, or needs a "mas" guarantor to secure a job, he may seek out a man from his "agär". For this reason there is motivation to observe rules of etiquette particularly with individuals in the "agar" secondary group, such as visiting or inviting them, bring them "enqutatash" gifts and flowers (through children) at New Year and "Masqal" festivals, etc. Such gifts are not given to complete strangers from a more distant territory, who are called "bada" (slightly derogatory term, with connotation of "rustic").

576 Interpersonal etiquette within the secondary group may lead to
572 closer personal relations between two individuals, taking certain

Footnote 93 - Leslau: An Ethiopian Minstrel's Argot. Journal of the American Oriental Society, 1952, Vol. 72, No. 3 pp. 102-109

576
572 specific forms. This relationship is mostly that of the "balenjära" (lit. mutual breadgivers), who enjoy the privilege of visiting each other without formal prearrangement; who may call upon each other to stand personal bond ("was"); who are likely to ask each other to act as negotiator for the marriage of a son or daughter before the affair becomes a formal kinship matter.

The very absence of a kinship tie makes it possible for "balenjara" to negotiate arbitration of blood-money to end or prevent a bloody feud between kin groups. The intenseness of the "balenjära" relationship may range from the trusted, though casual companion, "gorätsa", usually an age-mate, with whom interpersonal relationships are frequent and regular, but not intense; to the more intense but less frequent and less regular relationships with the "wädaj", a warm friend, "tebeq wädaj", the intimate confidante, so that the two individuals become "mestirana" (mutual bosom pals) to each other. "Balenjära" address each other with "antu" (the more polite form of "thou"; and other "thou", "anta", being used for children and inferiors mostly). When walking or standing and talking to each other, "balenjära" (and also other acquaintances, if on the same social level) interlace one or two of their fingers, loosely, but enough to remain in physical communication. Like kinsmen, "balenjära" men kiss each other on t he neck when they meet after not having seen each other for some weeks. Women may also establish "balenjära" relations with other women, and go on picnics together after the harvest in the dry season, especially on church holidays, but Amhara men believe that women do not form long-lasting friendships as often as men do.

[203] Dissemination of news and rumors through the "grapevine" occurs frequently through the channel of the "balenjära", who utilize the occasion of a bit of news as justification to drop in on each other, and to share barley beer and "enjära" bread (hence the term).

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

576 [572] Apart from this interpersonal relationship of choice, in which two individuals establish psychological response to each other (and mutual aid) outside the kinship group, most other forms of interpersonal etiquette are patterned so formally that they can be readily learned (even by outsiders). The vagueness and ambivalence of shifting etiquette of the Western world of modern times has not yet affected Amhara culture. Even modern-educated Amhara continue to fall back to the established pattern of traditional etiquette as soon as they return to their own country.

576 a) Formal Expressions of Status of Class, Age, Sex.

In formal expression of status, be it of class, age or sex, Amhara etiquette differentiates most sharply the dominant role from the role of the subordinate.

The most dramatic expression of this is the "gursha". It is enacted by the status superior toward the status inferior, a symbolic giving of food, money, wages, or other gifts. Thus, the master who wishes to indicate fondness and favor to the servant, will stuff some morsels of food into his mouth, publicly, while at dinner. A father will do it to his children, or to his wife. A chief may do it to a visiting "great man" of inferior or equal status, but never to a superior. However, a wife who has been married for some time and feels secure enough in her status to demonstrate equality, may jokingly return the favor and feed "gursha" to her husband, but only after he has initiated the activity.

[465] Servants, when receiving wages, receive them with both hands raised above the head, with bowed head and downcast eyes, and must never look at the money, much less count it in presence of the employer; for etiquette requires that wages be regarded as "gursha". (In recent years, the term "gursha" has become used in the sense of "tip", gratuity, baksheesh.)

576 Politeness is not considered "common", but differentiates most sharply between the behavior and expected behavior of the noble "great man" (tälläq säw) and the rustic (balagär). The "great man", noble is expected to show graciousness, noblesse oblige. When a social inferior tries to kiss his feet, it is gracious to chuck him under the chin so as not to let him reach the feet, so that the kiss lands on the [593] master's knee. Fathers or mothers imitate this same etiquette when their sons, arriving or departing, try to kiss their feet in symbolic etiquette of subordination. The motion is smooth and evidently routine and well-practiced.

195 Stylistic distinctions in the speech pattern also differ between expected etiquette of a noble and rustic. It is noble to talk slowly, softly, choosing words with unworried deliberation, which indicates to the listener that the noble, a man of few and calm words, is secure in his rank and position, and does not have to worry about possible results of poor communication. A noble uses soft-and-polite language (a unified concept to the Amhara), called "yäwätalanät negeger", showing good judgement and taste ("yäluñeta"). But his softness of speech has a firm and impressive quality, referred to as "läza mälkam" (lit. good tongue).

576 It is the mark of a social parvenue of "low" ancestry, if he struts ("tälattätä") with an upward-turned face, and is too proud to reply politely when addressed politely. A true noble, though he will not dismount from his mule when greeted by a commoner on foot (as he would to a social equal or superior), will raise his hat a bit, or raise his toga a bit, in reply to a greeting, in which the commoner has removed from his head his toga protection from the sun.

A social inferior may not sit down in the company of seated "great men" until invited to do so twice. He is expected to be ready to join

576 the retinue of the great man, to serve as messenger, whenever the "great man" decides to go anywhere. When the great man graciously extends his hand in greeting, the social subordinate takes it lightly into his two cupped hands as if it were a precious gift, a "gursha", and permits the hand to be withdrawn soon; for the extended handholding is limited to social equals. The great man is addressed as "getoch" (lit. "masters", using the plural). When appearing before a great man, the toga ("shamma") is redraped in the fashion of appearing before the feudal lord or king, leaving the upper part of the body bare (or nowadays, covered by another garment) in a gesture of self-abasement. Bowing is from the hip, both in case of individuals and by the population at large when the "great man" passes in public.

However, self-abasement among the Amhara is not supposed to be carried to extremes, in their opinion. It does happen that an old rustic ("balagär") will show great servility (resembling that of Uncle Tomism of American Southern states). But this is quietly mocked by other onlooking Amhara commoners. Such a "balagär" may, e.g. throw his toga off his own shoulders and spread it on the ground for a bishop or other great man to walk on, later treasuring the footprints. But it is considered etiquette, especially by young church students and other youngsters, to carry the sandals of adults or priests when they are taken off before entering church.

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195 It is the mark of the rustic (illiterate) if he is careless in the requirements of polite etiquette, for while the speech pattern of the noble is not expected of him (and would be considered affected, and is therefore never used), he is expected to remember that even he is an Amhara, and therefore somewhat "noble". He will be mocked and criticized for frequent impoliteness, such as using the term "enja" (lit. I don't know) which has the connotation of "... and I don't care", instead of the polite "alawqum" (lit. "it has not entered me", i.e. I don't

576 therefore, know). Abusing people with vulgar insults ("laddäfä")
195 tends to reflect on the abuser, so that he is considered "belgena", a rude person. Such a person speaks in high-pitched, strident style, to commoners; while to social superiors he fawns and wheedles, using baby-talk such as "abbabba" (daddy) to a lord and "amarma" or "tatay" (mummy) to a lady, in mournful tones of self-abasement and utter helplessness, begging paternal protection and forgiveness as if he were an infant that had not yet reached the "age of reason".

576 This is mocked, for the Amhara distinguishes between such servility and non-servile gestures of subordination, such as the "gursha", the bowing from the hip, and the walking backwards when departing from
[466] the king. Servants and other employees may indicate dissatisfaction at being short-changed, by bowing not quite so deeply the next time, whereupon a wise lord or employer will take a cue, increase the wage, and see it acknowledged by a specially deep bow or knee-kiss. Otherwise, protest will take the form of "murmuring", a semi-articulate protest which may lead to open rebellion.

576 Kinship terms are sometimes employed, outside the kin context,
601 to communicate respective positions in a situation of differential social status. Thus, it is respectful to address a status superior as "ayya" (lit. "my dear elder"), used to the father or elder brother. The extension of this term is fairly recent, in line with improved communication and transportation, but the rustic still uses the more ancient version, "ayya", (which has the same meaning). Because of this, a wit who does not want to address a rustic as "ato" (Mister), sometimes addresses the ignoramus, in mock respect, as "ayya". (This cheats him out of his "entitles", reminiscent of the use of the address "Doc" by Southern Whites to Negroes, avoiding "Mister")

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195 The speech pattern and etiquette to be expected from women,
562 nearly all of whom are illiterate and have no formal education, is

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195
562 classified by Amhara men in the category of the "balagar"; as high-pitched, strident, alternately vulgar and wheedling. The term for female, "syet", also means inconsistent. A woman's voice is not regarded as "soft", which concept is regarded as identical with "polite" and associated with "noble". Noblewomen are considered exempt from this rustic pattern of womanhood, and are expected to behave in accordance with "nobility".

b) Greetings and Address.

576 Formality in interpersonal relations is emphasized in greetings, forms of address, postures and gestures, sometimes in considerable detail and variety, since formal politeness is a culture focus among the Amhara.

Distinctions are made even in familiar address. Thus there are two ways of saying "thou": "anta" - to a child, social inferior, or semi-jokingly to emphasize intimate friendship to a social equal;

"antu" - polite "thou", used to older sibling, or by wife to respected husband.

The polite form utilizes the plural in address; and, in the case of pronouns, the third person plural. Hence :

"gëtoch" - (lit. masters), polite address to employer

"antu" - (thou) polite-familiar address.

"ersu" or "erswo" - (lit. he), polite "you" (singular) to male.

"erswa" - (lit. she) " " to female.

"ersachäw" - (lit. they) " " (plural), but also used as extremely polite singular address to lord.

The use of the plural communicates that the person addressed is worth several times as much, in material or spiritual worth, as an average person.

576 The master-servant relationship terms are utilized in polite address, to indicate real or pretended servility, or simple politeness:

"gëta"! (lit. master) call to stranger on the road.

"yäne gëta"! My Master! Address to one's father, priest, great man.

The feudal terms of address have so expanded in use during the past generation, that in recent years some have come to be used as terms of politeness even to respected commoners:

"emmëtëy" - "Milady!" Formerly used to address noble lady, now polite - warm address to respected woman.

"ato" - (derived from "abyeto", with connotation of "at your service"), once used in address to princes and high feudal lords, then to respected male heads of households, now simply used as "Mister".

"woyzäro" - Lady. Term of polite reference formerly reserved for royalty, then extended to wives of all nobility, now used in reference to any married woman, who is mistress of a household.

Feudal terms used derivations of adjectives, but the only one still in official use is "Germawi Hoy" (Oh Magnificence), the proper address to the emperor.

The use of kinship terms toward non-relatives, when seeking kin-like protection, has already been described: e.g. "tatay" ("mummy"), babytalk used by adults as endearing-polite address to a woman of child-bearing age; also, by extension, as polite-jocular address to a young girl soon to approach marriage age, e.g. by a teasing young man.

Religious terms are used on many occasions in daily life, as common etiquette, often without conscious awareness that they are religious terms: When two persons meet, the common greeting is as follows:

A: "endemin allu", or "endemin nawo" (polite) -"How are you?".

B: "egzër yemäsgän, dähna nañ"- "God be praised, I am well."

This interchange is repeated several times before both are assured.

576 When they have seen each other too recently to require this assurance, the greeting is simply "tenā-stellēn" - Hello! (lit. "May he, i.e. God, give you health in my stead"). When spelled out, this form becomes "egziabhēr yestellēn" (May God reward you for me), which simply means "Thank you!". When someone sneezes, others say to him "yemar" (lit. May He have mercy), to which the sneezer replies "yemarow" (May He be merciful unto you); if the sneezing continues, the interchange is reinforced with "Amēn".

Other terms of politeness are:

"yegerta" or "yegerta bälun" - "Excuse me", e.g. when stepped on toes.

"ebakwo" - "Please" (lit. I beg you).

When asking a person, e.g. a visitor, to take a seat, five gradations of politeness can be used to indicate the level of respect:

"quch bäl" - "Sit down (somewhere)", used to young person, (utilizing the imperative grammatical form as well as the familiar singular).

"quch bälu" - "(please) sit down", (using the plural imperative to single visitor), used in inviting adult neighbor to sit.

"tiqämtu" - "(Kindly) take a seat" (using plural of another verb).

"nor" - (lit. "Reside"). Very polite invitation, accompanied by low bow, to invite a great man, or long-absent friend of status; sometimes re-enforcing it further by use of the plural.

"nenoru" (plural)

The polite reply, in acceptance to the invitation, is "bäegziabhēr" - (lit. Since God wills it).

It is never polite to say "no", to reject an invitation or negotiation outright. In negotiations, discouragement in a gradual manner is used to communicate politely a negative attitude; e.g. in marriage negotiations already described, in which procrastination is used. In order to avoid the impolite "yällām" (no), the Amhara prefers to say "nāga" (tomorrow), or, even more politely, "eshshi nāga" (allright, tomorrow). When refusing to see a visitor, or rejecting an invitation to come to a feast, the standard form of polite rejection

●576 is to excuse oneself as indisposed due to "having drunk kosso", the bitter medicine against tapeworm, which medicine indeed incapacitates the patient for several days, and which is taken frequently and even regularly. He may send a written note of apology:

> " Yaderas kākebur (May this reach the Honorable....);
>
> " I have received your esteemed invitation to dinner. Thank you very much for having (thus) honored me. Having travelled, I have drunk medicine and am unable to come. I beg you not to be annoyed with me for remaining away under those circumstances (lit. in such a difficulty)". (footnote 94)

Gestures in greeting must indicate warmth, to be polite. In shaking hands, one does not withdraw one's hand soon, but keeps holding on loosely for several minutes, while talking. Men do this, also women to women, but a man will not hold a woman's hand in greeting unless she is close blood-kin, such as sister or daughter. Men (or women to women) who have not seen each other a long time, fall on each other's necks and kiss each other on both cheeks. The principle of indicating warmth in greeting overcomes the principle of the separation of the sexes in public, so that, especially in the rural areas and the commoner class where expressive behavior in public is more tolerated than in the upper class of nobility, men may cheek-kiss women in greeting, though not in flirting which must be private.

584 In spite of many other changes, it is still considered highly improper for a young man and young girl to hold hands when walking on a "shersher" (promenading). Not even the foreign-educated Amhara dare do this, not even in the modern center of Addis Ababa.

Footnote 94 - Ladis: An Amharic Reader, 1924, p. 276.

c) Visiting

574 Visiting kinfolk regularly, during the nine months of the dry
602 season, is a prime requirement. This includes, in this order of emphasis and frequency: patrilineal kin, matrilineal kin, affinal kin.

574 Visits to affinal kin are less frequent and more formal. When
606 visiting one's parents-in-law, usually twice during the dry season, the man is not supposed to come empty-handed, but should bring a sheep as a gift. He waits outside the in-law hamlet, just beyond the thornbush enclosure, and asks the children whether his father-in-law is at home. When the latter appears, the visitor enters and approaches the hut. He enters only upon invitation. There is no mother-in-law avoidance as such, but contact is reduced to a minimum, between son-in-law and mother-in-law, to achieve maximum privacy for both.

602 Flouting kinship obligation is regarded as a shameful deviation, indicating an evil character. Kinship relations represent much security for the individual, but also involve him in serious obligations, such as aiding kinsmen in blood-feuds and reprisal-raids ("bägäl"). A person who wanders away from the kin hamlet, or from kin obligations, when his mood or irresponsibility carry him, is called "läqo" (after the soft reed that grows rapidly at the least rain, but drops when grown to maturity).

574 Visitors, particularly strangers, must observe certain taboos,
754 lest they be suspected of bringing the evil eye. They should not ask the number of children, nor praise their health or good looks aloud. This is considered dangerous, because the "buda" spirit is always on the lookout for fat, juicy children so that he can magically "drink
[164] their blood" and make them waste away. (Children are vulnerable to many communicable diseases).

574 When visiting the sick, the visitor, especially female visitors,
● 576 are expected to express their sympathy in unmistakeable tones. The

574 visitors screw up their faces as if in great agony, even despair, and
576 utter the long, subdued wail "ayye". Religious expressions on such occasions are "egziabhēr yatnawo" (May God give you health), or "egzer yemarewo" (May God be merciful to you).

574 d) Hospitality and Dining.
539 Hospitality to kinfolk, members of the secondary group, and other travellers, in that sequence of emphasis, is a major culture focus. Numerous proverbs are often quoted, governing this behavior:

Even a poor man is expected to give what he can, even if he can offer little more than a pleasant face:

"More than his food,
his face pleased me."

Refusal of hospitality for the night is castigated:

"He has let me be eaten by the hyena" (at night).

A stingy host, who could well afford generosity, is mocked:

"He goes about, attended by 90 retainers;
but in his house famine reigns".

A host is advised to make his invitation specific as to the day:

"A dog, called for the right day,
arrives on his own feet".

574 A host is expected to urge the guest to take freely of profferred
262 food and drink. An invitation to "take coffee" is frequently the formula introducing a complete dinner. Staples readily available, unlike dinners that require preparation, include barley beer ("tälla"), roasted barley grains ("gebs golo"), roasted peas ("shembera golo"), boiled corn grains ("mashella"), milk, eggs, limp bread ("enjära"), and except among the very poor, coffee beans, which are roasted, crushed and boiled in front of the guest.

Dinner is regarded as a feast ("dogge" or "gebber") and should include meat and butter, so that it is impolite to invite anyone on

264 procedure, also called "gämäsä" is in imitation of procedure at the court of nobles, and it is known that kings have always had their special cupbearers ("gäbash") who tasted the drink against possible poison, and who also removed any floating debris ("gäffäta") such as beeswax from the drink.

574 The hospitality group on non-kin members which meets most
575 regularly, once a month, is the "mähabbär" association, already described. Based originally on religious private communion, each member plays host once a month to drink from "Mary's cup" ("yänaryas sewa"), to feast, for chant and dance ("zäffän") and less formal gossipy entertainment and conversation ("tächäwwäta").

C. Verbal Expression: Formalities; Wit; Pedagogic Riddles.

192 Emotional exclamations in everyday use are highly formalized:

Pain - "häyy häyy" (also if a painful truth "sinks in"; astonishment).

Fear - "woyy" (especially by women, just before a fearful event happens).

Fearful surprise - "oyyi" (e.g. when someone stumbles, or has an accident).

Alarm - "errii" - (cry of alarm; also of great sorrow as in death of kin).

Skeptical surprise - "erra" ("you don't say?!"); Reply: "mut" (abbreviated from "yemut", lit. "May (the emperor die) if this is not true").

Pleasure - "essäy" (to indicate comfort, e.g. when sitting down after having climbed a long, tiring hill).

576 Formal politeness in etiquette always considers the social status
514 of the person addressed. Thus, there are six ways of informing an
192 inquirer that the person he seeks has gone out to defecate or urinate:

Impolite, though not vulgar: "weha afässäa" - (lit. he poured water).

Polite: "der wätta" - (lit. he went to the bush).

Polite: "äj wätta" - (lit. he went out the door).

576 Very Polite: "shängo wätta" - (lit. he went to a meeting).

514 Extremely Polite: "märo zorä" - (lit. he left home).

192 Extremely Polite: "shersher wätta" - (lit. he went for a walk).

522 Wit, used in court or by homespun philosophers to entertain their friends, compensates for the many formalities in this culture and society. 538 The famous wit, Aläqa Gäbre-Hanna has already been cited. Proverbs, "tärät" and riddles may be used to make a comment of esoteric meanings, understandable only to one's initiates. Proverbs fulfill a social function, beyond mere entertainment, for even philosophy, being utilized to begin any negotiation, such as for marriage. This is emphasized in proverbs on proverbs:

[539] "Like Halleluyah before the chanting (in church),
(begin with) a proverb before the discussion".
"(to drink) mead, (first get) a container,
to talk, (begin with) a proverb".

538 Proverbs and riddles used by parents, teachers and leaders of
59? society have a pedagogic function, and can be used to reprimand and
[861] instruct. Conflict between father and son, the complexities involved, and the possibility that contrary to the major cultural assumption of parental superiority, the son may sometimes have logic on his side, is indicated by the following:

[539] "(Says the father):

"Your Father you cannot accuse (e.g. in court, shaming yourself)
nor plow the sky,
nor roast water".

"(Replies the son):

"The father, by his own shame he will stand accused;
the sky, by lighting it is plowed;
water, in a pot it is steamed".

821 animals and evil spirits give birth. It is called "näber wäldalächh" (lit. the leopard has given birth), or "jeb wäldach", (lit. the hyena has had a litter).

823 Volcanic activity, which occurs not infrequently in these mountains that are of young geological age, is interpreted as a threatened repetition of the Biblical event that swallowed Sodom, and is indeed called "Sodom" (another connotation is "greedy").

Geographical directions are taken either from the Geez, e.g. "me'erab" for west (lit. where the sun sets), and "mesraq" for east; or the location of Abyssinian provinces is used: "Semyen" for north, "Azeb" for southwest. South is "däbub" (probably Cushitic).

821 Daytime and nighttime are regarded as two very different phases of the universe, altering radically behavior of natural phenomena, animals, plants, even human behavior. The phrase "the night belongs to the hyena" refers not only to the nightly roaming of that animal, but also to the roaming of evil spirits at night, as well as dangerous strangers and actual bandits. As a consequence, even the hospitable, outgoing householder of the daytime changes to sullen and suspicious behavior if strangers suddenly arrive after dark. When he must leave the hut, he carries a weapon, in the rural areas. Even in Addis Ababa, the official curfew at midnight is little resented by the average Amhara, because of this traditional pattern.

574 576 The period of a week is regarded as a time unit with regard to the primary group and kin visiting. When two members of these groups have not seen each other for more than a week, they greet each other with "endemen säläbatu" (lit. how did you spend the week away).

776 825 The world of the spirits, who also inhabit the universe in large numbers, is believed to be in close relationship with the animal

157 absence of self-restraint, he can give free rein to the typical
554 Amhara fondness for rapid and noisy argumentation, quoting witti-
cisms, puns and proverbs. He does not have to control his typical
Amhara curiosity about non-material objects and human behavior, and
can stare freely and openly. Even his servility to the noble is
only formal and not internalized, for, while he bows deeply from
the hips, his eyes are raised to observe every detail of the situa-
tion (especially to see whether some reward can be wheedled).

The Amhara noble, however, is required to be at least out-
wardly, an introverted personality. This is expressed in formal
dignity, a partly withdrawn and meditative manner, a serious (though
not severe) mien. His bodily movements must be slow and deliberate;
his pattern of speech must be the same. Most of the time he remains
pokerfaced. He has been trained to observe by moving only his eyes,
not his head. He does not express his basic emotions directly,
except with social equals under proper circumstances. He must
appear too proud to show curiosity, even for interesting and strange
articles brought by the foreigner; he accepts them with just a
dignified and appreciative nod of the head.

152 There is the principle of "noblesse oblige". The noble be-
554 haves as if his due will certainly come to him - he does not have
to go and seek it. When a servant has angered him, the noble does
not fly into a rage publicly, though he may have him routinely
flogged later on. It is noteworthy that even the womenfolk among
the nobles share this personality training. Although hysteria is
152 very common among Amhara women, it is rare among noblewomen. Even
554 in case of great emotional distress (e.g. if a child has died)
158 when commoner Amhara women wail loudly, scarify themselves, and roll
304

181 strained behavior, civilization, but which now has assumed the con-
178 notation of "modern" in the Western sense. It includes the improved
562 status of the woman, no longer a mere hewer of wood and hauler of water; and it even became formalized in 1942 when an imperial proclamation, in establishing a Consultative Committee on Legislation, gave instruction to draft new laws that would be "not repugnant to natural justice and humanity".

178 But many old values still persist even at the apex of the
576 hierarchy where the prime "change agent", the emperor, resides. Most
644 notable, to foreign observers, is the continuation of the "daj tenat" (faire l'antechambre: lit. waiting at the gate). This is the traditional palace courtyard ceremony of bowing to the emperor at least twice a week. Emperor Haile Selassie has permitted this institution to continue. Every governor-general has his own "daj tenat" court when he returns to his provincial capital; and so on down the line.

195 The traditional oath on the king's life, sworn even in petty matters and everyday affairs ("Hayle Selassye yemut", lit. May the emperor die; i.e. if I lie) is still in common use and no attempt has been made to suppress or reduce its usage. Haile Selassie well remembers that during the first half of his reign his Amhara subjects still used to swear by the name of the dead Menelik or by provincial dynasts such as Ras Ougsa.

178 Outlook: the "culture lag" between material and non-material culture that has created so many social problems in so many parts of the present-day world has not yet taken place in this society. The old attitude of accepting and enjoying trade goods without trying to reproduce what the foreigner has created, still persists. Direct exploitation of what nature provides still fills most physi-

2: Allen C-5 (1941) 1943 MP5 Amhara MP5

144 of Semitic blood. There is rather more of the Semite in the Tigraian and the Amhara than in the Shoan and the Gojjami. The Tigraian language has come [197] much under Semitic influences, and there are many common elements in Amharic and Arabic: not only in vocabulary but also in syntax. The Amharic 202 alphabet, with over two hundred and fifty odd letters, is a very exact instrument for rendering the language. It is derived from one of the old Semitic alphabets of the Middle East. Amharic has many explosive sounds which [194] often give the impression that the speaker is excited and indignant when he is not, and with the impatient foreigner this can sometimes lead to misunderstandings.

142 Physically the Amhara is slight and light-boned with regular rather [516] delicate features. He has quick almost bird-like movements and his manner gives the impression which I cannot describe better than by the word [145] fluttering. The hair and beard has the characteristic Hamitic corrugation. Men often go iron grey in middle life, but seldom white. The hair of the [302] women is artificially frizzed and dressed with butter-grease to fix it. This gives them a gollywog appearance.

157 The Amhara have the most charming manners and they like to stand on ceremony. They have a complicated social hierarchy and always dismount 576 as a salutation to superior persons. They will also touch with their lips the hands or knees of superiors. At the same time they have the naturally easy 644 and democratic outlook of the East; and the poorest man will expect attention and the right of access to a Ras, or even to the Emperor. The approaches to the palace at Addis Ababa were lined with sometimes quite humble people, farmers and soldiers, waiting an opportunity to secure the Emperor's decision on some matter.

157 To respond to his ceremonial manners is an easy way to the heart of the 576 Ethiopian. At the same time they are quick to take offence and their shrill voices are soon raised in anger.

147 The frail physique and mercurial temperament of the Amhara is doubtless the result of the rarefied alpine atmosphere and of a diet predominantly of [262] grain paste seasoned with strong condiments—which they vary from time to time with orgies on practically raw meat. But fragile as they look, the Amhara are, nevertheless, extremely hardy. They will sleep out in all weathers with nothing to cover them but their thin cotton robes; they are remarkable runners and can maintain a jog trot all day; they are like goats on the hillside.

153 I believe the Amhara to be naturally intelligent with a brain which only awaits proper training and development. During the five years of the [191] Italian occupation, no small proportion of the population of Addis Ababa acquired a fair knowledge of Italian. I knew a boy of twenty who, in addition to excellent English, was proficient in Arabic, Somali, Galla, and Swahili. He came, of course, from Harar, which is a great metropolis for peoples from all round the Red Sea. Abyssinian recruits acquired a knowledge of Morse with remarkable facility.

157 When it is possible to overcome the linguistic difficulty and get on friendly terms with Ethiopians, they prove delightful companions, naturally kind, generous and friendly, with a charming sense of humour and often a nice

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

may become a nun or remain a widow as she pleases. If a priest sleeps with another woman whilst his wife is alive he does not enter the church any more, nor does he enjoy its goods, and remains as a layman. And this I know from having seen a priest accused before the patriarch of having slept with a woman, and I saw that the priest confessed the offence, and the patriarch commanded him not to carry a cross in his hand, nor to enter a church, nor to enjoy the liberties of the church, and to become a layman. If any priests after becoming widowers marry, they remain laymen, As it happened to Abuquer, who married Romana Orque, sister of Prester John, who I have already said was a priest, chief chaplain of Prester John, and he was disordained[1] and made a layman. He no longer enters the church, and receives the communion at the door of the church as a layman, and among the women. The sons of the priests are for the most part priests, because in this country there are no schools, nor studies, nor masters to teach, and the clergy teach that little that they know to their sons: and so they make them priests without more legitimisation, neither does it seem to me that they require it, since they are legitimate sons. All are ordained by the Abima Markos, for in all the kingdoms of Ethiopia there is no other bishop or person who ordains. The orders are given in two stages, as I will relate further on. I with my own eyes saw them given many times. In all this country the churchyards are inclosed by very strong walls, that the wild beasts may not disinter the dead bodies. They show them great reverence, no man riding on a mule passes before a church, even though he is going in a great hurry, without dismounting, until he has passed the church and churchyard a good bit.

[1] *Foy desordenado e feito leigo*; not a correct expression.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

CAP. XXVIII.—*How the goods arrived at the town of Barra, and of the bad equipment of the Barnagais.*

On the 3rd day of July of the said year, '20, our baggage 648
arrived at the town of Barra, where we were. We hoped to start at once, and went to speak to the Barnagais requiring him to despatch us. We met with good words from him. On the following day a gentleman from the court of Prester John arrived, and the Barnagais gave him such a reception that he forgot us. When this gentleman arrived the Barnagais went out of the town to receive him at a small hill near the houses; and there went out with him many people, and he was naked from the waist upwards. The gentleman placed himself on the highest spot above the rest, and his first words were: the King sends to salute you. At these words all went with their hand upon the ground, [576]
which is the courtesy and reverence of this country. After that, he spoke the message which he had brought, and when he had finished hearing it the Barnagais clothed himself with rich garments, and took the gentleman to his house. It is the usage of this country to hear the words which the [203]
Prester sends outside the house, and on foot, and he to whom they are sent has to be naked above the waist until they have been delivered, and if the message is one of satisfaction on the part of Prester John, as soon as it is given he at once dresses himself: if it expresses his dissatisfaction, he remains naked as when he heard it. This Barnagais is brother of the mother of Prester John. After this the ambassador, and we with him, came to speak to the Barnagais, and he sent us away saying that for the love of God we should leave him, that he was sick. When we came they did not allow us to enter, saying that he was sleeping. So much passed of this sort that the ambassador said that he ill remembered what he had sworn and promised to the Captain-major of the King of Portugal, that is to say,

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

693 he hears the parties until he has determined upon it, and then he goes and relates the cause to the Barnagais, who gives the sentence: if it is a small cause, or if the parties wish it, the Alicaxi gives sentence, and the cause is concluded. Moreover, in all judgments, whether the Barnagais or the Alicaxi judges, there must be present an honourable man, whom they call by the name of his office Malaganha, who is like a tabellion or notary of Prester John, and if either of the parties wishes to appeal, he requires from this man the certifying of the cause for Prester John and his judges. All the lords of the countries of any of the kingdoms of Prester John have an Alicaxi and a Malaganha appointed by the Prester; so also have the captains subject to the Barnagais and to the other great lords. The gentlemen who are about the house of the Barnagais, and other grandees who come on business, have this manner of coming from their abodes. Whilst at the place he is living at he mounts his mule, seven, eight, or ten men on foot go before him as far as the first gate, and there he dismounts. If he is a person of greater importance, he takes seven, eight, or ten mules, or else three or four, according as the person is. So he dismounts at the first gate, and arrives at the second, after that, if they are bidden at once to enter, they go in, if not, they sit outside like beehives in the sun, without any other pastime. All these honourable persons wear sheep skins at
[292] their necks or on their shoulders, and he who wears the skin of a lion, tiger, or ounce, is more honourable. When
576 they come before the lord they take off the skin, as we take off our caps. Whilst we were in this town of Barra on a
721 market day, they made a solemn proclamation that the Barnagais intended to make war on the Nobiis, five or six days' journey from the limits of his country, towards Egypt, neighbouring to the countries of Canfilla and Dafolha,[1] which are subject to the Barnagais, as I have before mentioned.

[1] Dafilla.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

In this country there are in some parts very flat lands, and 133
in others mountainous; and altogether they are fruitful
lands. There are no snowy ranges, but withal severe frosts,
especially in the flat lands. In all the lands there is great [231]
breeding of cattle.

He says that he did not see the river Nile, and he reached to two days' journey from it, and the days' journey which they went were small ones, namely, four or five leagues, a little more or less. But some of those in his company reached its source, and they say that it rises in the Kingdom of Gojame, and its source is in great lakes, and where it rises there are islands, and thence it commences its course and goes to Egypt.

The time when the Nile rises in Egypt is (as they say) from the 15th day of September and later, and in all October; and the reason of this is, because the winter of Ethiopia begins from the middle of June to the middle of September, and on account of the great rains which take place in it without this winter ever changing, the Nile overflows in Egypt at that time.

It is the general custom of Prester John and all the peo- 492
ple for no man on horseback to pass a church, but before 576
they reach it they dismount, and so pass it, and lead their
beasts by the bridles, and after passing they mount.

When Prester John and all his people travel, the altar and 484
the altar stone on which mass is said, all goes on the
shoulders of the priests as on a litter, and there go eight
priests with each altar by turns, that is, four and four: and
a priest goes in front of them with a thurible, and further in
front a zagonay ringing a bell, and all the people go away
from the road, and those that are on horses dismount, and
show reverence to the altar stone or altar.

There is no grape wine there, more than in two houses, 273
where it is made publicly, namely, in the house of Prester
John and the house of the Patriarch Abima Marcos; and if

6: Messing E-5 (1953-1954) 1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

538 When miffed, or in temporary disgrace, he would request permission to return to his native
159 Gondar. Subsequently he would send excuse after excuse to the capital for refusing to go back there, until he felt that he had been sufficiently coaxed to assuage his pride as a scholar and that further hesitation might result in serious difficulties, even for him. Empress Taitu was a very powerful figure and often protected him when he had gone too far with Emperor Menelik (her fifth husband).

[114] Although the following stories have no titles except "Story of Alāqa Gäbre-Hanna," I have given them names to point up the major emphasis. This material was gathered orally from Amharic-speaking peasants and nobles in the Gondar region (during my field trip to that area in 1953-54 on a grant from the Ford Foundation).

539 *The Wit And The Nitwit.* AG-H didn't like the rumor going around that he had become a snob, that he didn't greet common people politely any more. One day, accompanied by his usual retinue of friends and admirers, he was greeted effusively with deep bows by a certain donkey-driver who was known as none too bright. In return, to quash the nasty rumors, AG-H bowed [516] just as deeply, from the hips, instead of the usual nod from one of his station in life. But, unable to resist the temptation for a witticism, he greeted the donkey-driver with the words *"Endēt ad-derachuh? 'How are ye?'"*

Unaware that the second person plural had been used, the proud donkey-driver was soon boasting at the nearest barley-beer hut of the honor he had received. His cronies made him repeat the exact remark, suspecting some twist. They quickly convinced the poor fool that the greeting had included him in the same class with his donkeys, and the simpleton slunk away in shame.

Another version of the story: But the donkey-driver was, after all, a proud Amhara. Realizing that he had been made a fool of, he took his walking stick, went to the house of AG-H, and beat him unmercifully. This was one time that his wit struck back at him.

Good Eating Comes First. Though greatly honored at the court of Emperor Menelik in newly-built Addis Ababa, AG-H was once again homesick for his native Gondar. Finally, he was granted permission for a leave home.

He promptly organized his small caravan and was about to mount his mule when he noticed two fat cows being taken to slaughter. Thinking of the long trip ahead without fresh beef, he decided to wait around and obtain a good share of the meat which was being rapidly parcelled out. The meat had to be washed down with a huge jugful of barley-beer and honeymead, and so the day passed with pleasant feasting. It was late afternoon when it happened that Emperor Menelik came riding by. Surprised to see the homesick scholar still in the capital, the Emperor addressed him: "I gave you permission to go, and you are still here?"

But, as usual, his wit did not fail AG-H. *"Lam gäb* 'the cows were entering,' your Majesty," he replied. (The phrase is used to indicate dusk, when the cows come home, too late to start on a trip. The cows had indeed "entered," i.e., into the stomach of AG-H; and no one could accuse him later of having told a lie to the Emperor.)

Pride Of A Man From Gondar Province. The next time AG-H became homesick occurred in the middle of the long Lenten fast. The housewives of Gondar were famous for their many spicy recipes for cooking fish in that season, and when AG-H thought of these his mouth watered and nothing pleased him any more in Shoa province.

One day he was invited to dine at the house of a noble of Shoa. The odor of fish being cooked attracted him to the cooking hut. It seemed to him that the woman cook had not properly cleaned the fish and had added too much water. He began to moan and groan.

"What's the matter?" asked his host.

Pointing to the watery fish stew, AG-H replied: "The fish are better off than I. They are *in their native state,* but I am so far from mine!"

Safety From Robbers. Once again the long rainy season was over, the rivers had receded, and the trails were passable again. AG-H managed to obtain a generous purse of Maria-Theresa thalers from the Empress and was on his perennial way back to Gondar.

He was just emerging from the lowland valley of the Abbai (Blue Nile) to climb up the escarpment of the dangerous province of Gojjam, which he had to traverse. Suddenly one of his companions spotted a band of robbers waiting at the top of the upland trail.

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

tent secluded and when they go out they ride mules astride, are completely veiled or rather covered up in their *chammas* and are accompanied by an escort on foot, one or two of whom walk or trot by the side of the mule holding the lady in position.

Getting on to the mule is an operation that must by no means be witnessed by the profane masculine eye; I remember on the occasion of the first visit paid to my wife by an Abyssinian lady of rank I went to the entrance to speed the parting guest. To my surprise a number of members of the escort took off their *chammas* and held them all round the mule so that their mistress could climb into her saddle in complete seclusion.

But rigid as may be the rules of privacy governing the lives of women, there are no harems, and no guard of eunuchs to watch over them as in Moslem countries.

Nevertheless other Eastern customs are practised, such as circumcision among men and a mild form of clitoridectomy among women; this custom, be it observed, is not as is often supposed of Jewish origin, but probably of much more remote antiquity, and is further evidence of the Hamitic descent of the Abyssinians; according to Gibbon circumcision had been practised "by the most ancient Ethiopians, from motives of health and cleanliness" and presumably not therefore as a religious rite.

The nation as a whole has not adopted European dress, although it is worn to some extent in Addis Ababa, and by individuals who have been to Europe. They are proud of their national dress and the Emperor still encourages its use at court functions and receptions at the palace.

The distinctive feature of the dress is the *chamma*,

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

291 which is worn by both men and women of all ranks; and by the beauty of the *chamma* can as a rule be judged the position or state of purse of the wearer. It consists of a piece of material about three yards in length and from two to four yards in width according as to whether it is doubled or not.

291 286 The more beautiful specimens of these are hand-woven from native cotton, spun and prepared by the Abyssinian women. These are usually edged with red or mixed coloured silks, and those worn by the high priests, great chiefs, and princes and princesses have a very handsome border varying from twelve to eighteen inches wide, carried out in silks of vivid colours woven into an artistic design. They are as fine as gossamer, though large and warm; they are not as a rule sold, but if ever obtainable by Europeans cost from 200 to 500 dollars.

The more ordinary *chammas* are also woven by hand, but of imported cotton, and by comparison are of a much harder and coarser character, though still nice to look at. Natives who cannot afford the hand-woven shawl make use of a length of *abougedid* or cotton sheeting for the same purpose.

291 The *chamma*, which is not unlike the old Roman toga, is draped round the shoulders, often being brought up over the head to the eyebrow and again over the lower part of the face and nose, leaving but the eyes visible. It is always lowered from the face and head as a mark of friendliness or respect, and generally when passing Europeans, though I have known Abyssinians of the anti-foreign old régime to cover up their faces more closely when passing the *Frangi*. At court those in attendance twist the garment round the waist and

[576]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

Perhaps this sort of disposition was not unrelated to the part Manz played in sparking the restoration of Amhara rule in Shoa, thereby preparing the way for the dramatic resurgence and expansion of the Ethiopian state at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Gondarē Ethos

The unique character of Gondar derives first of all from the fact that it was a city. During the whole period of Ethiopian history reviewed in this chapter, the Gondar period was the only time in which the emperors resided in a fixed capital, and Gondar was the only permanent population center that grew beyond the contours of a large village. As in ancient Egypt before the rise of Thebes, the concept of the city had played scarcely any role in the political thinking of the Amhara, and so anomalous was the rise of Gondar that Ludolphus, writing in the fifth decade after the founding of Gondar, could not believe stories that Gondar was a large city and predicted that "perhaps in a few years there will be nothing to be seen of it."[38]

Like many oriental cities, Gondar consisted more of a collection of small homogeneous societies than of a diffused heterogeneous urban population. The city was divided into several quarters, each of which lived its own life. The imperial compound was of course foremost of these. It contained the great complex of buildings erected during more than a hundred years, from Fāsil to Iyāsu II, and was the seat of affairs of state. The compound was separated from the rest of the city by a stone wall, whose twelve well-guarded gates each served a special function or class of people.[39]

The nobility resided in a quarter known as Gaing Bēt. Here the dwellings were spaced at comfortable distances, and nearly every house was surrounded by a garden. Abyssinians of lower rank lived in the more densely populated sections of Faras Bēt and Denkākē.

The Christian hierarchy had its own quarters. The *abuna,* an Egyptian monk appointed by the Coptic Patriarch at Alexandria as spiritual head of the Ethiopian Church, lived with his retinue in one sector.[40] Another area, Eçhagē Bēt, was reserved for the Amhara monk who served as administrative head of the Church. Each church compound, moreover, was the focus of another residential section, where its clergy kept their modest huts. The Eçhage Bēt and the church compounds were considered sanctuaries and thus, in theory at least, were secure from plunderers. The Gondarēs and wealthy people from the country used these areas as a safety vault for their valuables.

The ethnic groups which settled in Gondar had their respective ghettos. The Muslims lived in the lower part of the city adjacent to the river Qīha, which was convenient for their ritual ablutions. They were looked down on by the Christians, and meat slaughtered by one group would not be touched by the other. Poncet observed that when an Abyssinian met a Muslim in the

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

streets, "he salutes him with his left hand, which is a mark of contempt."[41] The Falasha, potters and metalsmiths of Judaic faith, were similarly segregated, and plied their arts and crafts in another quarter.

Though many different peoples came together in Gondar, and though it was a meeting-point of trade routes from the Sudan, the Red Sea ports, and the African interior, Gondar's cultural role was not primarily that of a melting pot of diverse traditions. It served rather as an agent for the quickened development of the Amhara's own culture.[42] And thus it became a focus of national pride. The countryfolk looked on Gondar not as a hotbed of alien custom and immorality, as they often regard Addis Ababa today, but as the most perfect and advanced embodiment of their own traditional values.

The Gondarē himself, as denizen of this second Jerusalem, was prouder still. A snobbish pride became one of the conspicuous marks of Gondarē character. This pride is manifest in many ways. On the one hand, it appears as incorrigible vanity. Hence arise the many caricatures of the Gondarē—as one who goes hungry in order to purchase fine clothes in which to strut about, or as one who satisfied his hunger at home before going out in order not to appear needy at his host's table. (Perhaps the most famous of the stories about the Gondarē is the one about the man who spent the night naked and shivering because, for form's sake, he hung up his only garment as a curtain about himself.) On the other hand, Gondarē pride appears as the immense dignity with which the Gondarē carries himself, his sensitivity to the nuances of personal relations, his choice use of the Amharic language, his noble bearing. If there is a polarity in Gondarē life comparable to the Manzē polarity of bravery versus aggression, it is pride versus vanity.

Gondar's role as political and cultural capital of the nation for so long produced two other distinctive aspects of the Gondarē ethos. One is the love of *shumat*, or political appointments. Despite the unfortunate denouement of the Gondar monarchy, Gondar's importance as chief administrative center for such a long period had a deep influence on the ways of the people. "Give the Gondarē any office whatsoever," it is said, "and no matter what the salary, he will be happy."

The Gondarē's love of *shumat* is expressed in two phenomena which contrast strikingly with their Manzē counterparts. In the naming of children, the Gondarē prefers names which express an ambition for political honors, such as *Makonnen*, meaning "nobleman," and *Negusē* ("my king"). Furthermore, litigation in Gondar is characteristically concerned with disputes regarding *mādariyā*, land which has been given as an award for service to the government, as well as with disputes over *rĭst*.

The other prominent aspect of Gondar's ethos relates to its position as the center of Ethiopia's Christian literati. The fact that it was the ecclesiastical capital of the country is not the most important consideration here. Of course,

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

"May He bring you safely from the year of Mark to the year of Luke!" Nearly every day of the month, moreover, is dedicated to some holy figure, the main ones being:

Day of Month	Name	Meaning
1st	*Ledatā*	Birth of Mary
5th	*Abbo*	St. Gabra Manfas Qeddus
7th	*Selassie*	Trinity
12th	*Mikā'ēl*	St. Michael
16th	*Kidāna Maherat*	Covenant of Mercy (for Mary)
19th	*Gabre'ēl*	St. Gabriel
21st	*Māryām*	St. Mary
23rd	*Giyorgis*	St. George
24th	*Takla Hāymānot*	St. Takla Hāymānot
27th	*Madhānē Alam*	Savior of the World
29th	*Bāla Wald*	Festival of the Son

This schedule is well implanted in the peasant's mind, so much so that the names of these holy days come to take the place of calendar dates. Thus, instead of saying "He fell sick on the fifth" or "He is due to come on the twelfth," the Amhara normally says "He fell sick on Abbo" or "He is due to come on Mikā'ēl."

Time for the Amhara is thus not a morally indifferent and qualitatively undifferentiated continuum. It is a series of occasions with more or less sacred significance. These occasions are arranged in the form of cycles. In contrast to the Catholic calendar with its different saint for each day of the year, every month in Abyssinia repeats the same set of saints' days. Each year, of course, repeats the same cycle of annual holidays. The years themselves do not run on continuously, but follow the cycle—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—again and again. For the more learned, finally, there is a twenty-eight-year cycle which must elapse before the same year begins on the same day of the week again.

The Amhara's experience of time is thus essentially cyclical. The religious calendar, the most important dimension of time for him, consists of a series of epicycles, in which the monthly rounds play themselves out within the larger circles of annual and quadrennial rounds. Historical events are at best secondary: the seasons come and go, generations come and go, but there is not much new under the sun. The better-known prophecies foretell the return of some state of things that obtained in the past. Kassa chose the throne name of Tēwodros II because of the prophecy that a king with that name would arise to repeat the mythically fortunate reign of Tēwodros I of the fifteenth century. In this century has arisen the prophecy of another Tēwodros to come. Still another prophecy—of a short-lived invasion of Ethio-

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Besides dominating Abyssinian ritual activity, they constitute the major foci for the organization of time and space.

In the Abyssinian world view, time is not rationalized for secular purposes. Some peasants calculate the hour by the shadows on mountains, but the effort is not taken very seriously. Units of time are of little concern in the workaday world. When a man says he is going on a trip "tomorrow," everyone assumes that he means he *may* be leaving a few days later. Many appointments are made, but few are kept literally; so that the phrase *hābashā qaṭaro* ("Abyssinian appointment") has come to signify an appointment to which one comes quite late or not at all. There is little sense of time in the abstract. When an Amhara peasant is asked how long a certain trip takes, he does not reply "ten hours," but rather: "If you leave here at dawn you will arrive there before it turns dark"; and his estimate of the arrival time tends to vary according to whether or not he wants the questioner to make the trip.

Historical time is still more vaguely conceived than local time. The Amhara peasant has little sense or knowledge of history. He considers all that happened before Menelik's day as "ancient times," and more or less as an undifferentiated period. He knows very few of the earlier emperors, no historical dates, and often not even the exact year, let alone date, of his own birth. He has no idea when the church in his area was built and no interest in preserving such historical monuments or mementos as may exist in his country.

When, as often happens, anecdotes about historical figures are retold around the fireplace, the interest is not in the historical context or significance of the story but in the cleverness or heroism of the characters. Much attention is paid to genealogical lines insofar as they are relevant to potential litigation regarding rights to the use of land, but not with any concern for an objective account of historical connections. In fact, the same man may give differing accounts of the way in which he is related to a given ancestor, depending on the practical interest which underlies his recitation.[8]

With regard to his religious calendar, however, the Amhara peasant is acutely conscious of the passage of time. This concern is symbolized by a ceremony held in the churches after Mass at the beginning of each new year. A *dabtarā* stands before the people and calculates the dates for the important holidays and fasts during the coming year. Sometimes this exercise is preceded by relating the story of Demetrios, the man who after long struggles succeeded in discovering the formula by which the Orthodox calendar can be computed—so that, for example, the short fast before Lent will begin on a Monday.

The symbols of this calendar are the names of the saints. Each group of four years is named after the Four Gospels, with that of St. John (*Yohānnes*) representing leap year. The customary greeting at New Year's is of the form:

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When he has eaten and washed his hands, the children take their breakfast quickly. One or two of them then lead the remaining animals out to pasture—the cows, which have already been brought back and milked; the sheep and goats; the young draft animals. They spend the day roaming the hills with their flocks in the company of shepherds from nearby farms, unless it is harvest time when each must stay close to his family's fields where the herds feed on stalks and chaff.

The peasant leaves with his older sons or manservants for the fields. (If it is a fasting day, they go directly to work without any breakfast.) The day's activity may consist of cutting the ripe crops with a fine-toothed sickle, or threshing the harvest under the hooves of cattle and mules, or winnowing grain by tossing it up in the breeze. More often than not it will consist of plowing, virtually a year-round occupation. For each crop a field must be plowed at least twice: first to loosen the crusted soil, and then to cover up the seed that has been sown. Planting occurs in several months, the schedule varying according to region. In some regions, for example, barley, wheat, and chick-peas are sown in September and October; corn, beans, and peas in May and June; and *ṭēff* in July. In many areas a January planting is also common. The central position of plowing in the world of the Amhara peasant is shown by the fact that the word for his vocation, *ǐrshā*, literally means "plowing."

On plowing days, the wooden plow with its single iron share and the yoke are carried to the field, and the oxen are driven along with sticks and shouts. If it is sowing time, bags of seed are loaded on donkeys which join the procession. On his way to work the peasant is likely to see a neighbor at a distance and cries of "How did you spend the night?" are exchanged. At the field the team of oxen is yoked and the work begins. It lasts for about five hours, and the peasant is indeed wretched who does not have a helper with whom to take turns steering the heavy plow and cracking the whip as the oxen trace furrow after furrow.

The peasant's wife is too busy in the morning to sit down for a regular breakfast, so she takes bites of food at will as she works about the house. There is much ado in the house as she and her daughters, and perhaps maidservants, carry out a variety of chores—baking *ǐnjarā*, preparing *ṭallā*, spinning cotton, collecting dung for fuel, sweeping rubbish off the floor, carrying water from the spring, weaving straw baskets or mats. The impression of business is heightened by the chickens, which hop in and out of the house as they please, though they must be shooed away from grain drying in the sun.

Toward noon a fresh batch of pepper sauce is prepared. If the peasant is working in a distant field, his wife carries lunch out to him—or else risks being beaten with a stick. If he is not too far away he comes home for lunch, which he eats together with his wife. They talk about what each has done in

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the students. Rivalries and hostilities tend to get channeled along these lines, particularly along the Amhara-Tigre axis, and petty fights have erupted from time to time among groups of students so divided. The Amhara students, moreover, tend to interpret their numerical majority in school as self-evident justification of their political superiority in the country, an interpretation sullenly rejected by non-Amhara students who tend to be more aware of the Amhara's much smaller percentage of the national population. However, the students are regarded by their teachers, not as members of tribes, but as Ethiopians. The school authorities thus act as a countervailing force in behalf of national symbols, and their effect is considerable.[14] While entering students naturally tend to identify in the first instance with their tribes, sixty per cent of the secondary school seniors and seventy-five per cent of the college students questioned about political identifications indicated that they considered themselves Ethiopians before they considered themselves members of tribes.

The teachers also provide practical information of various sorts to assist the acculturation of their charges. They teach the etiquette of modernity, including the importance of punctuality and the keeping of promises. The objects and events in their own lives quietly demonstrate to the students much about modern Western culture, while their use of English in and out of class accustoms the students to the use of their country's official European language. Thus, besides promoting respect for impersonal standards and the sense of Ethiopian nationalism, the teachers fulfill a third extracurricular function of some importance: that of making the schools a vehicle for social mobility, a place to acquire that minimum of European habits which is essential for attaining high status in a modernizing society.

The total accomplishment of the teachers, however, falls short of giving the modern adolescents a coherent orientation to life. The cultural lessons they transmit are neither consistent among the various schools nor closely related to the situation of changing Ethiopia. The organization of education, as of everything else in Ethiopia, reflects the abiding anxiety of the government about permitting any one foreign nation to gain a monopoly in any sphere of activity. Each secondary school and college has heretofore been virtually autonomous, pursuing those policies and teaching those lessons which best fit its point of view, a point of view now guided by British culture, now by American, now by Swedish, now by French, now by Jesuit. As Margery Perham long since observed, this created a situation in which Ethiopian students have gotten "fragments from the experience and ideals of each [nation] without getting the fullest and best influence from any one national tradition."[15]

Another shortcoming of the educational program has been the relative paucity of materials relating to Ethiopian realities. As one Ethiopian educator has written: "School children are at times more familiar with the history of

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565 554 The local nobility, on the other hand, were eminences whose lives and reputations were bound to a more circumscribed locale. While the non-royal nobility, or *maḳuānnent* in the stricter sense, performed as high dignitaries at the imperial court and governors of large provinces, the local nobility were district chiefs and judges, or even simply wealthy landowners, who enjoyed considerable deference. Though they might not be known outside of their home regions, these men were, for the mass of the population, the lords of existence. *Ka-Gondar negus / yägar ämbärās,* "the petty district chief [is obeyed] more than the Gondar king"[19] expresses folk wisdom on the subject. The Amharic terms which designate this class of men are *bälābbät* and *shum,* terms we shall want to consider more closely below.

565 184 Despite these distinctions among members of the upper stratum of Abyssinian society, with respect to their general orientation and style of life they differed only in degree. They created and shared what might be called a "gentry subculture," even though it was not so differentiated from the general culture as was the case in Europe and China. In the present context, it will be meaningful to treat them as a single status group.

565 184 86 [576] Special manners and skills were self-consciously taught to children of the *maḳuānnent,* most of which remain part of the gentry subculture today. An etiquette of instinctual inhibition is taught. Some attention is given, for example, to toilet training, which is spontaneous among peasant children. Spitting in public is proscribed. Physical aggression is discouraged in favor of the more subtle forms of satire and patient manipulation of others. A quiet, reserved manner of speaking is stressed, in contrast with the less inhibited and cruder self-expression of the peasantry. Dignity of comportment is expected at all times; a noble should not, for example, express great enthusiasm or surprise over anything. Sobriety is incu cated as a virtue; alcohol is *la-çhawā lĭjj mädasetchā / la-bälagē mäzabäbatchā* ("for the nobleman's son a stimulant, for the commoner an intoxicant"). In short, the gentry subculture stresses the general ideal of bringing a child up to be conspicuously genteel, or *çhawā.*

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565 184 868 [871] [534] [883] Sons of the nobility have traditionally followed a privileged curriculum.[20] They were given lessons in horseback riding and weaponry at an early age. They were also taught how to swim, an uncommon skill among the Abyssinians. Reading would often be taught, for which schooling a man of the church might be brought in as a tutor, or the boy might be sent for a while to a monastery. He might also learn how to play the *baganā,* the ten-stringed lyre used to accompany certain forms of religious and plaintive secular songs. Instead of spending his teen-age years at the plow, which was regarded as beneath his dignity, the noble boy would follow his father to court and observe the ways of litigation and the manner of passing judgments; or he might be sent as a page to the court of the king or some great lord.

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The instruction of girls in noble families was not so different from that of peasant girls, though they were spared some of the menial drudgery. The *çhaiwā* girl would be taught all the household arts, but it was understood that she would be provided with numerous slaves to do the work after marriage. Her own adult chores would be limited to the preparation of *tajj*, the beverage of the nobility, and special dishes for her husband; while the preparation of *tallā* and food for guests would be the work of domestics.

The style of life of the nobility is colored above all by a seemingly unlimited command of deference. They are addressed as "my lord" by all comers, and waited on in a hundred ways wherever they go. Every "big man" is attended by a flock of servants and retainers, who accompany him on trips and spare him the slightest exertion. This is so elemental a feature of Amhara culture that big men are commonly referred to with the associative prefix *enna-*; for example, *enna-Dajāzmātch Hailu*, meaning "Dajāzmātch Hailu and his men."

The social space of a nobleman is crowded with the issuing of commands. When he visits the home of another, he orders the servants and young people there just as imperiously as if he were in his own home. The wives of the nobility develop much the same manner, though from a more passive position. They spend a good deal of their time sitting on their beds and issuing orders. This sort of indolent, vegetative existence has produced the obese figure and morose countenance for which some Abyssinian ladies have been noted. On the other hand, from her particular vantage point the noble lady has often played an influential and enlightened part in court and regional politics.

Conspicuous consumption among the *makuānnent* thus takes the form of a surfeit of servants. The household of a nobleman of modest rank might boast, in addition to numerous maidservants who procure and prepare food and drink for the establishment, as many as ten to fifteen male servants. Plowden has left us a description of some of their functions:

> One carries your shield, and whenever you go out he saddles your mule and accompanies you, and in the house he makes himself generally useful about your person; another makes your mead, arranges it, and is also perhaps a gunner, and supplies you with game; another is doorkeeper and order-keeper generally. One or two, older and wiser, are counsellors, and their knowledge of the country, and of customs and tricks, is of the greatest service; another has charge of the corn, watching that the maidservants do not steal, and arranging the allowance of all the rest; others are grass-cutters only, according to the number of your beasts; another is a wood-cutter for firewood, very necessary in a country where they have no coal, and the wilderness is free to all.[21]

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covers the Amhara home.* The latter is related to customs concerning adoption.

The adoption of children among traditional Amhara takes place through a ritual in which the child sucks the honey-dipped thumb of his intended foster parent. The latter thereby becomes the child's *ṭuṭ abbāt,* or breast-father. In some cases the child actually sucks the nipples of the *ṭuṭ abbāt.* Used metaphorically, the image of sucking someone's breast is employed to indicate becoming close to, or ingratiating oneself with, a superior; breast-feeding is so explicitly connected with emotional security that people are inclined to allude to it when finding a new source of security.

The Amhara's attachment to passive, pleasurable activities centering on the oral zone appears in a wide variety of forms. Manipulation of the lips is one of these. Amhara often stand about fingering their lips or rubbing them against some object, much as people in another culture might scratch their heads or stroke their chins. Children may be humored by having their lips played with by a relative. The frequent covering and uncovering of the mouth with a part of the toga, that is so characteristic of the Amhara, may be a sublimated form of this.

The lips are used in Amhara culture for a variety of expressive purposes. The Amhara identify persons and places, not by pointing with the finger or hand, but by distending the lips in a certain direction. Kissing, while seldom used for romantic purposes, serves a number of other expressive functions. Relatives or friends of either sex kiss each other on both cheeks after a long separation, the elder or superior in status kissing first. Children and servants greet their superiors by kissing their feet, which they also do to show gratitude for some favor. One kisses one's own hands before extending them to receive a gift. Kissing one's fingers is done to signify an oath or a special appreciation of something, the meaning being "I swear by it."

Religious sentiment is typically expressed through kissing. The devout Amhara kisses his fingers and touches the table to show thanksgiving after a meal. The church is greeted by kissing a part of the building, and going to church is referred to as "kissing the church." Following devotional services the priest's cross is kissed by all present, and often the Holy Book is kissed as well. When the ark is brought outside on holidays, reverence is shown by falling to the ground and kissing the earth.

While, moreover, romantic kissing is an uncommon activity among the Amhara, Amharic literature at times represents this activity with poignant intensity. Thus, in an unwritten Amharic couplet one hears:

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* The Gurage, by contrast, place a straight stick atop their homes. So do the Amhara of Gojjam Province.

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> The boundaries of your lips are like the sugar cane;
> No matter how much one sucks them, one is never satisfied.

And in one of the few lyric passages in the first novel ever written in Amharic, the author resorts to the imagery of kissing in describing the beauty of an army camp at sunset:

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> The plain on which they had encamped was vaster than the mind's eye could measure. Except for that hill on which he stood, there were no elevations or declivities; no roots to trip or confound the foot; not a stone to discomfit the eye. It looked like a calm sea that every breeze had spared. The boundaries of heaven and earth were united by lips of love; lip to lip they were joined like the parts of fitted basketry. It appeared as though it would hurt them to separate, that they had entered a vow not to part.[5]

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Talking for the sake of talking is another oral outlet of which the Amhara is generally fond. "In every country," remarked Arnauld d'Abbadie, "the plowman is miserly and sly; but the Ethiopian is, in addition, particularly loquacious."[6] The simple greeting of acquaintances evokes a barrage of ritualistic conversation, a phenomenon which stunned the Englishman Harris:

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> Even two old crones, who are obviously tottering on the very brink of the grave, and who are afflicted with every pain and with every sorrow entailed by the fall of our first parents, never meet in the street without indulging in a string of good wishes which are reiterated so long as their breath will permit. "How are you? How do ye do? How have you passed your time? Are you well? Are you very well? Are you quite well? Are you perfectly well? Are you not well?"—are questions which serve as the prelude to a thousand other interrogatories; and at each response the Deity must be invoked as to the unadulterated happiness and perfect felicity that has been unremittingly experienced since the last meeting.[7]

A number of other conventions provide further opportunities for this pleasure in talking. Anecdotes and gossip are not merely reported, but are expounded at length with the aid of colorful expressions and gestures. Riddle games are enjoyed by adults as well as young people. Men vie with one another at length in a semiformalized kind of playful boasting. In the church schools all reading is done aloud, a habit which persists among many students of secondary schools when they study outside of class.

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A related pleasure in making sounds for their own sake appears in the Amhara's delight in repeating the words or nonsense syllables of his folk songs. On a more refined level, there is his evident pleasure in lulling over and savoring the lines of a choice couplet. We have here for a whole culture an instance of what Brill has ascribed to the poets:

> Poetry is a sensuous or mystic outlet through words, or, as it were, through a chewing and sucking of nice words and phrases. The poet plays with the

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*121 571 264 181 [829] A similar spirit is observed in Amhara commensality. Meals are customarily eaten from a common *ǐnjarā* basket. The sauce is ladled onto the center of the *ǐnjarā*, and is consumed ensemble by those sitting around the basket as they dip into it with pieces of *ǐnjarā* broken off from the edges. Traditional Amhara scoff at what they regard as the excessively individualistic Western custom of sitting each person down to a separate place at the table and thus depriving the meal hour of what they feel should be its basically communal tone.

*121 574 571 181 At a more formal level of interaction this disposition is expressed in the form of *hospitality*. Amhara hospitality is luxuriously attentive and thoughtful. For example, if there is foreknowledge of a guest's arrival, he is awaited at some distance from his destination and escorted with much to-do into the home. His mule is at once unsaddled and given to feed. The guest is given a place of honor in the home, and a glass of *ṭallā* is immediately brought for him. Amhara etiquette prescribes, moreover, that a glass is not properly filled unless it overflows; and it is repeatedly filled to overflowing whenever the guest has drunk some portion of the beverage. As a gratuitous gesture of good faith, the host—or his wife, or servant—tastes some of the beverage first, a sign that no "medicine" has been added. Before long the wicker table is produced, and the guest and his party are served copiously—no matter what time of day they arrive (unless, of course, it is a fasting day). When the guest has eaten to satisfaction, the host will insist that he eat some more, by repeatedly issuing injunctions like *tegābazu* ("Help yourselves!"), *moḳar* ("Try!"), or *āfar sehon* ("If I become dust!"—i.e., "If you do not eat you will be condemning me to death"). The Amhara host is also likely to insist that his guest spend the night. The guest's feet will be washed, and the host's bed will be given to him, or long grass will be cut for bedding on the floor. At the time of farewell, the host and his attendants follow the guest and his party a good distance along the road. The guest continually cries, "Return! Return!" and the host agrees but continues to serve as escort.

[609] [485] Such hospitality is not wantonly bestowed upon the casual wayfarer. Normally it is reserved for those who qualify as worthy guests: relatives, friends, or persons of high rank. Nonetheless, there does exist among the Amhara some feeling that even the unknown stranger should be shown hospitality, for he is *ya-egziābhēr engedā* ("a guest of God"). Travelers are generally assured that somebody somewhere will show them hospitality; there are no inns in traditional Ethiopia, for it is considered wrong to exchange food and lodging for money.

*121 576 571 181 Related to this pattern of hospitality is a delicate sense of *respect* that the Amhara displays toward all comers; often, even toward his enemies. When two Amhara pass each other anywhere, they are expected to bow slightly and say: "How did you pass the night?" or "How did you spend the day?" If they

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have not seen each other for some time they will say: "How have you sojourned?" and kiss each other on both cheeks. Depending on the closeness of their relationship and the interval between meetings, this introductory question will be followed by a more or less lengthy series of other questions.[12] Even when one merely passes by the home of another, he is expected to cry out his greetings from afar.

In a number of other ways, the rough edges of social life are softened by Amhara codes of etiquette. Custom prescribes that measures of grain must be filled to overflowing at the market. Grammatical forms indicating respect are used between people who are not on intimate terms. Uncovering one's head is another way of indicating respect during the greeting. Still another form is to rise whenever someone enters the room, and wait until the new entrant has pronounced "*Bezgiēr!*" ("By God!") and sits down before reseating oneself.

On more superficial levels of interaction, then, Amhara behavior is apparently not egoistic. In the more fundamental areas of work and serious communication, a different picture appears.

Altogether there is little spontaneous *co-operation* in Amhara life. The Amhara prefers to work by himself, and, when he needs assistance, to order a subordinate to help him rather than to rely on friendly assistance from his neighbor. The distribution as well as the production of goods is carried out on an essentially individualistic basis. Each nuclear family takes care of its own provisions, even when the land being cultivated belongs to one of the parents and when more than one family lives within a single compound. (Even within the nuclear family, the proprietary sentiments of husband and wife regarding objects and land which each may own are rather lively.)

There are exceptions to this general rule. In some Amhara areas certain co-operative work forms have become institutionalized, for example. One of these forms, called *wanfal,* is invoked when there is a considerable amount of plowing or harvesting to be done, and a group of men in a given area take turns working on each other's land. Another form of co-operative work, called *waffar,* is employed when there is some extraordinary job to be done—putting on a new roof or digging land that is too steep for plowing—which cannot readily be reciprocated. In this case a man sends word around that on a certain day those who live in the area should come to work at his place, in reward for which generous quantities of *ṭallā* and *dābo* will be given them.

Despite the existence of special forms like *wanfal* and *waffar,* co-operation is only a peripheral feature of Amhara work activity. These forms involve but a temporary coincidence of individual interests. They are not used because co-operation as such is felt to be an important and natural part of social life—as seems to be the case, for example, among the Galla of Ethiopia.

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*121	*arām*	"indolent" (literally, "full of feces")
181	*ya-dehā lījj*	"son of a poor man"
571	*ya-lēbā lījj*	"son of a thief"
578	*yat abāt*	"bastard" (literally, "where is your father?")
[673]	*waslātā*	"lazy no-good"

Other, less direct forms of insult are also widely employed. As was already mentioned, a major use of the wax-and-gold formula is to express insults in so veiled a manner that direct reprisal is unlikely. Another tactic is that of not showing someone the proper respect or in some way manipulating the forms of etiquette to his disadvantage. A favorite anecdote concerning Alaqā Gabra Hānnā illustrates the simultaneous use of both methods: the Alaqā once flattered a donkey driver by bowing quite low to greet him and calling, *Endēt adarātchu?* ("How did you spend the night?"). Only when the man proudly related the episode to his friends, so the story goes, was he made to realize that the greeting was expressed in the plural form (*-atchu*), implying that he and his donkey were being placed in the same category.[15] Still another mode of indirect insult is that known as *ashmur*, in which two friends insult each other vigorously at the top of their voices, the real object of their abuse being a third party who is within earshot.

If the Amhara is by disposition inclined to bestow insults, he is still readier [865] to take offense at the slightest hint of one directed at him. One of the tasks of socialization among the Amhara is to sensitize the young person to the various types of insults and to motivate him to strike back when he is so offended. Insults are frequently part of a vicious circle which moves from petty disagreement to serious argument to litigation at court, *dulā* fights, [576] and even premeditated murder. Breach of etiquette may lead to no less serious consequences. In one court case which the author observed, a man was accused and convicted for addressing his father-in-law, whom he normally addressed by the polite form *ersewo*, with the familiar form *anta* in a moment of anger.

Argumentation, litigation, insulting, and revenge comprise the hard core of social interaction among Amhara. While it is possible to exaggerate the significance of these forms in the total pattern of Amhara social life, there can be little doubt of a strongly dissentious disposition just below the surface, and often at the surface, of Amhara interpersonal relations. Still another axis along which this individualistic disposition tends to be manifest is that of deception and suspicion.

*121 The Amhara is a master at *deception*. With straight face and convincing
181 manner he will relate the most preposterous fictions. The Amhara themselves
571 tend to be aware that this is one of their characteristic activities. When, for
577 example, I replied to the query of an Amhara gentleman that some horn
[123]

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sadistic component—a component that gets thrown into relief in such phenomena as the Amhara compulsion to stone dogs and the occasional wantonly cruel behavior of Amhara soldiers.

While hierarchical relations among the Amhara are upheld to a large degree by the subordinate's fear of physical punishment or some other deprivation, a complementary disposition of perhaps greater importance is the sentiment of *respect for figures of higher status*. Family, age, wealth, and political or ecclesiastical rank are all variables which evoke feelings and gestures of deference proportionate to the vertical distance between the two parties. Many of these gestures consist of elaborations on ordinary forms of etiquette used among peers. Thus, in greeting a superior one not only uncovers one's head but also leaves it uncovered as long as one remains in his presence. If kisses are exchanged in greeting, the superior kisses first, on the cheek, while the person of lesser status kisses the superior's foot or knee. The inferior never sits while the superior stands, and often he remains standing even when the latter is seated.

Other gestures of respect are peculiar to the inferior-superior relationship. If an inferior is seated, for example, he must rise to speak when addressed by a superior. If eating in the home of a superior, he must rise when water is brought to wash his hands. If riding a mule, he must dismount and bow when encountering a nobleman riding on the way. The ritual of respect performed when entering the house of a superior has been vividly described by an Ethiopian student in the following passage:

> When someone, let us say a man of a lower social rank, wishes to enter the house of a superior to greet him or to make some private appeal he must first of all take off his shoes and then give them to his servant if he has one with him; if not he leaves them outside in a safe place. Then he must twist his *Ǯäma* [shammā] round his waist and holding the end in one hand enter the hall and crossing both arms at the lower chest, bow down very low to the ground before his host. Having done that he throws that end of his *Ǯäma* which he is holding over the back of his right or left shoulder (depending on how he wears his *Ǯäma*) and then remains standing near the wall until he is told to sit. When given permission to sit he must choose a lower place. He does not sit in any position he likes but must cross his legs, straighten himself and bow his head a bit looking most of the time at the floor.[20]

Respect is further shown toward superiors through the use of special terms of reference and address. A superior is always referred to and addressed in the third-person-plural respect form. The term *gētotch* ("lordships") is often used instead of his name or rank in reference. In addressing a superior *gētāyē* ("my lord") may be used as well as *gētotch*. Superiors with titles are always addressed by their rank rather than by name. In addition, slightly

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

older or more prestigious males are addressed as *gāshē* ("my shield"); the corresponding term for females is *etēyē* ("my sister"). Much older people are addressed by words signifying "father" or "mother."

It is true that the forms of respect toward superiors are often repeated mechanically and sometimes serve to cover up a distinctly hostile disposition toward certain superiors. They nevertheless do represent to some extent a genuine solidaristic sentiment—perhaps the most profound and influential social sentiment in the Amhara social system. It rests in the last analysis on the fact that the Amhara family develops a pronounced sense of filial devotion as well as habits of filial obedience. Amhara society can dispense with horizontal solidarities and communal attachments because it is held together, sufficiently for traditional purposes, at least, by an infinite network of "father-son" relationships.

The egoistic element in the hierarchical pattern is further modified by a sort of joking relationship that sometimes develops between inferiors and superiors. The harsh interrogation of inferiors at times shades into a sort of wry banter; sons or servants may be called "thief" or "scoundrel" in an undertone of unmistakable affection. At times, moreover, the direction of the jesting may be reversed. Amhara servants are noted for playing practical jokes on their masters, which the latter usually appreciate when the jests are clever.[21] Here again, wax and gold is the perfect medium—for expressing aggression against a superior while at the same time appearing to maintain the respect relationship. The following couplet, attributed to Naggādrās Tassamā Eshatē, aptly illustrates this genre:

Ennānta maḳuānnentotch ba-mīn waṭ balātchu?
Eññām ba-shurwātchen ennāntam bāssātchu.

What sauce, my lords, was on your plate?
We had but peas; 'twas fish you ate.[22]

Here the poet appears to be complimenting the nobles on their more elegant cuisine at a banquet; but there is a pun on the word *bāssātchu*, literally "with your fish," for it may also be taken to mean "you took more than your share."

Within the hierarchical pattern, finally, one finds expressed a certain amount of generosity which, as we have suggested, is relatively uncommon in relations among peers. This appears in connection with the *begging* and *almsgiving* which occur in many sectors of Amhara society. For church students beyond the elementary level, begging is the primary means of livelihood. Youths who have left home to study *zēmā* or *qenē* with a master wander about today, as in former times, carrying small baskets and pleading: "For the sake of Mary! For the sake of God!" in order to get their daily morsels. The activity is so organized that when a large number of students

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

Synchronization and Privacy

*121 181 571 The degree of independence that exists in Amhara society may be further assessed by focusing on certain abstract properties of its organization as well as on the concrete institutions just discussed. In this context two variables are particularly relevant. One, degree of synchronization, concerns the extent to which the behavior of the individuals in group activities is strictly controlled and co-ordinated. The other concerns the extent to which the individual may be free from the intrusion of others when he desires privacy.

Except in the area of protocol and etiquette at the royal court, synchronization is conspicuously lax among the Amhara. Ample scope is left for individual whim and impulse in nearly every area of concerted activity. Groups of people going on a trip, for example, make little attempt to start at the same [476] time or to keep abreast of each other. Carefully co-ordinated teamwork is scarcely known in manual labor. Military units proceed, not in squads and [704] platoons, but as masses of individuals.

*121 181 571 533 535 The lack of synchronization in singing and dancing is perhaps the most striking case of all, for in these activities the participating individuals are supposed to be performing in unison. Yet the choirs of *dabtarā* sing with little regard for the standard line; each chorister sings as the spirit moves him, and the resulting cacophony is punctuated from time to time as some voice stands out by intoning a phrase with new energy a few beats before or after the majority of his fellows. A similar phenomenon occurs in dance, where what apparently is intended to be a symmetry of motion appears rather as a cohort of individual movements.* The impression left by such performances is that the Amhara accord a high degree of independence to the individual whenever he does take part in collective enterprises.

*121 181 571 [591] • [576] The Amhara likewise maintain a high degree of respect for individual privacy, despite the hierarchical character of their society. This is shown, first, in the expectation that each nuclear family should inhabit its separate dwelling. The individual home is regarded with great respect; no one, not even a relative, presumes to enter another's home without being properly acknowledged and escorted inside. When possible, private quarters are isolated from those where guests are entertained. The ideal Amhara household, [592] found among the well-to-do, contains separate buildings for private quarters [342] (*ʾilfīn*) and for the hall where company is received and entertained (*addārāsh*).

* At times, it may be noted, when more complex ceremonies permit a plurality of musical and choreographic themes to be going on simultaneously, despite the lack of synchronization the over-all aesthetic effect is often quite impressive. Such is the case, for example, in the ceremonial procession on Ṭimqat day described in chap. iii.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

Although women and children do not have so much freedom, the adult male Amhara who chooses to go off by himself for some reason is not bothered. In at least two cases, moreover, the right to solitude is institutionalized: that of the monk or hermit, who is left to his meditation and prayers, and that of the student of *qenē*, who spends hour after hour in some lonely place composing his verse for the day.

Privacy is further protected among the Amhara by the shared belief that others normally do not have a just claim to information about one's person. Even such superficial matters as one's place of origin or one's family connections are not readily disclosed on a first encounter. This differs markedly from the custom of some other groups in Ethiopia, such as the Borana Galla, among whom it is the first order of business in any conversation to identify the "vital statistics" of one another.

The machinery of wax and gold, again, exists as a useful apparatus with which to protect one's private identity and desires. In authoritarian relations, where the superior questions the subordinate with impunity, this evasive and equivocal manner of response constitutes the latter's main defense against yielding the information sought by the questioner. The superior may feel that he has a right to the information he seeks, but, if he is a good Amhara, he understands that he may never be told the whole truth.

Thus, viewed as a whole, Amhara society does not envelop the individual in a complex network of obligations and constraints. The institutional structure of the society is relatively thin. There are few collectivities to which the individual might belong, and fewer still to which he must belong. He can, if he chooses, live at the very periphery of society—as a hermit, a monk, a *shīftā*, a minstrel, a beggar, or, if a woman, as a solitary householder. For the typical Amhara, the main obligations are to fulfil work responsibilities in behalf of the nuclear family, the parents, and to provide income and services for landlords and chieftains. Here, too, there are important degrees of freedom. An oppressive family situation may be readily relieved by divorce; an oppressive landlord or ruler may possibly be brought to justice over time, or in extreme instances fled from; and for the oppressed vassal or retainer, there is always the alternative of running away to another master or of turning to one's own devices. As a Christian, the Amhara is required to fast a good deal; but attendance at church and membership in religious fraternal associations are voluntary, and for the religious scholar there is considerable freedom of movement.

It is difficult to assess the relative weight of the few but heavy constraints that do exist in Amhara social structure and of the many areas of real independence. But in view of the considerable latitude for unconstrained action that has been described in this section, it would seem valid to characterize

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
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*278 *759 plete therapy. Sometimes the herbalist cites in addition the fees which he recives, as recognition of these "expert" abilities, and even of his client's satisfaction with the therapy. In practice, a nominal fee is almost always paid, whatever the therapy's success. The medhaniyt seci receives a token fee of perhaps E$.50 to E$1., and probably no more than three to five times that amount for a successful cure. Although the medhaniyt awakiy's token fee is no larger, he can expect five to ten times that amount for a successful cure. Actually, the medhaniyt seci and the medhaniyt ateci almost always offer weak primary medicines for serious ailments; when they do provide a strong medicine, it is generally for a non-serious ailment.

Beyond this, there is little non-medical behavior to set off one secular healer from another. The social identity of the secular healer is defined dyadically. The dyad includes only healer and client, and is generally contingent, lasting for the duration of the medical activities. Further, the recruitment of secular healers entails no other significant social identity. Behavior between healer and client is commonplace but correct, generally without signs of special deference but with full measure of the elaborate greetings normatively given to men of respectability, indistinguishable from those exchanged between land-owning peasants (ristenas). Spe-

• [576] *[192]

*278 *759 • 576 cial deference, perhaps the consequence of a medhaniyt awakiy's magnaminity in freely reducing his fee for a particular client, rarely extends to even addressing the healer by the mildly honorific title of "gita" in greeting.

*278 *787 *759 Medhaniyt Korac. Herbalists usually perform all activities associated with their therapies, except when processing and administration are delegated to their clients. This is not invariably the case, however.

*(192) There are a number of medicaments which are either used in widely-owned recipes for non-serious ailments (such as the enkowkow seeds used against tapeworm), or appear as common ingredients in a wide range of recipes. Frequently, an herbalist can more conveniently obtain such medicaments from a professional medicine gatherer (the medhaniyt korac) than he can gather and store them himself. Sometimes, an herbalist utilizes the medhaniyt korac's services because his therapy identifies a constituent medicament only by its generic name; as a consequence of this, the herbalist does not know the names of the medicament's constituent botanicals (for example, the medicament known as sebat kelems, the "seven colors"). Similarly, the herbalist may be unfamiliar with the provenience or appearance of botanicals called for in his therapy. Strictly speaking, the medhaniyt korac offers no therapeutic assistance beyond providing medicaments.